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ABSTRACT

In April 1917, President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany. Under the powers granted to it by the U.S. Constitution, Congress passed the Selective Service Act of 1917. Among the first regiments to arrive in France, and among the most highly decorated when it returned, was the 369th Infantry, more gallantly known as the "Harlem Hellfighters." The 369th was an all-black regiment under the command of mostly white officers. This lesson relates to the powers of Congress to raise and support armies in Article I, Section 8, and to citizens' rights to equal protection of the laws in the 14th Amendment, Section 1. The primary sources for the lesson are seven photographs taken of the 369th during World War I. The lesson correlates to the National History Standards and to the National Standards for Civics and Government. It provides historical background for the story of the 369th Infantry (with seven resources) and suggests diverse teaching activities for classroom implementation, including document analysis, creative writing, listening to music and discussion, writing news articles, student research, application projects, discussion, and analysis. Appended are a photograph analysis worksheet and the World War I photographs. (BT)

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National Archives and Records Administration

THE CONSTITUTION COMMUNITY

The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)

Photographs of the 369th Infantry and African Americans during World War I

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http://www.nara.gov/education/classrm.html

2000

The Constitution Community is a partnership between classroom teachers and education specialists from the National Archives and Records Administration. We are developing lessons and activities that address constitutional issues, correlate to national academic standards, and encourage the analysis of primary source documents. The lessons that have been developed are arranged according to historical era.

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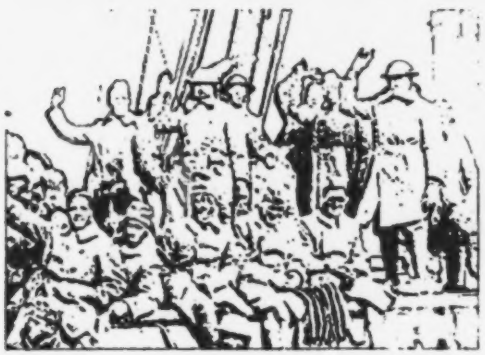

Photographs of the 369th Infantry and African Americans during World War I

Constitutional Connection

This lessons relates to the powers of Congress to raise and support armies in Article I, Section 8 , and to citizens' rights to equal protection of the laws in the 14th Amendment, Section 1 .

This lesson correlates to the National History Standards.

Era 7 -The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)

- **Standard 2C** -Demonstrate understanding of the impact at home and abroad of the United States involvement in World War I.

This lesson correlates to the National Standards for Civics and Government.

Standard II.B.4. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding diversity in American life.

Standard V.A.1. -Explain the meaning of citizenship in the United States.

Standard V.C.2. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding civic responsibilities of citizens in American constitutional democracy.

Cross-curricular Connections

Share this exercise with your history, government, English, and music colleagues.

List of Documents

All are photographs.

1. Famous New York regiment parade as children gather along the line of march. Underwood and Underwood.

2. New York's famous 369th regiment arrives home from France. Western Newspaper Union.

3. Two American Negroes win Croix de Guerre. International Film Service.

4. Lieutenant James Reese Europe, famous jazz band leader, back with the 369th Regiment. Underwood and Underwood.

5. Famous New York soldiers return home. Underwood and Underwood.

6. Wounded men in parade of the 369th Infantry. Photographer: Paul Thompson.

7. Famous New York African American soldiers return home. Anxious crowds gathered in the streets. Underwood and Underwood.

Historical Background

While the Great War raged in Europe for three long years, America steadfastly clung to neutrality. It was not until April 2, 1917, that President Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany. "The world," he said, "must be made safe for democracy." Quickly, Americans swung into action to raise, equip, and ship the American Expeditionary Force to the trenches of Europe. Under the powers granted to it by the U.S. Constitution (Article I, Section 8) "to raise and support Armies," Congress passed the Selective Service Act of 1917. Among the first regiments to arrive in France, and among the most highly decorated when it returned, was the 369th Infantry (formerly the 15th Regiment New York Guard), more gallantly known as the "Harlem Hellfighters." The 369th was an all-black regiment under the command of mostly white officers including their commander, Colonel William Hayward.

Participation in the war effort was problematic for African Americans. While America was on a crusade to make the world safe for democracy abroad, it was neglecting the fight for equality at home. *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* (1896) established that the 14th Amendment allowed for separate but equal treatment under the law. In 1913 President Wilson, in a bow to Southern pressure, even ordered the segregation of federal office workers. The U.S. Army at this time drafted both black and white men, but they served in

segregated units. After the black community organized protests, the Army finally agreed to train African American officers but it never put them in command of white troops.

Leaders of the African American community differed in their responses to this crisis. A. Philip Randolph was pessimistic about what the war would mean for black Americans -- he pointed out that Negroes had sacrificed their blood on the battlefields of every American war since the Revolution, but it still had not brought them full citizenship. W.E.B. DuBois argued that "while the war lasts [we should] forget our special grievances and close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our white fellow citizens and allied nations that are fighting for democracy." And in full force, America's black population "closed ranks."

During World War I 380,000 African Americans served in the wartime Army. Approximately 200,000 of these were sent to Europe. More than half of those sent abroad were assigned to labor and stevedore battalions, but they performed essential duties nonetheless, building roads, bridges, and trenches in support of the front-line battles. Roughly 42,000 saw combat.

American troops arrived in Europe at a crucial moment in the war. Russia had just signed an armistice with Germany in December 1917 freeing Germany to concentrate her troops on the Western Front. If Germany could stage a huge offensive before Americans came to the aid of her war-weary allies, Germany could win the war.

The 369th Infantry helped to repel the German offensive and to launch a counteroffensive. Although General John J. Pershing wished to keep the U.S. Army autonomous, he loaned the 369th to the 16th Division of the French Army. With the French, the Harlem Hellfighters fought at Chateau-Thierry and Belleau Wood. All told they spent 191 days in combat, longer than any other American unit in the war. "My men never retire, they go forward or they die," said Colonel Hayward. Indeed, the 369th was the first Allied unit to reach the Rhine.

The extraordinary valor of the 369th earned them fame in Europe and America. Newspapers headlined the feats of Corporal Henry Johnson and Private Needham Roberts. In May 1918 they were defending an isolated lookout post on the Western Front, when they were attacked by a German unit. Though wounded, they refused to surrender, fighting on with whatever weapons were at hand. They were the first Americans awarded the Croix de Guerre, and they were not the only Harlem Hellfighters to win awards; 171 of its officers and men received individual medals and the unit received a Croix de Guerre for taking Sechault.

In December 1917, when Colonel Hayward's men had departed from New York City, they had not been permitted to participate in the farewell parade of New York's National Guard, the so-called Rainbow division. The reason Hayward was given was that "black is not a color in the Rainbow." Now Colonel Hayward pulled every political string he could to assure his men would be rewarded with a victory parade when they came home in February 1919. Crowds thronged New York City's Fifth Avenue as the 369th marched to

the music of their now- famous regimental jazz band leader, James Reese Europe. After the parade, city officials honored the troops at a special dinner. What kind of America had they come home to?

World War I initiated changes on the home front that permanently affected the lives of Americans, black and white. While defense production was up, the war had cut off the flow of immigrant labor. Workers were needed in the North, and African Americans seized the opportunity. Eagerly they left behind a rural South of Jim Crow laws, lynchings, and oppressive economic conditions. The Great Migration -- the most massive internal migration in American history -- brought several million African Americans North before the Depression stemmed its flow. With the migrants, black culture entered the American mainstream, changing it forever. Musical styles never heard before outside the South became "hot." The Jazz Age had begun. The Harlem Renaissance blossomed in one of the nation's greatest artistic outpourings, bringing to the fore a great poet, Langston Hughes.

On the political front, participation in World War I did little to directly advance the equal rights of African Americans. But for many Americans both black and white, it did heighten awareness of the gulf that existed between American rhetoric and reality. After the war A. Philip Randolph was fond of saying to his audiences "I want to congratulate you for doing your bit to make the world safe for democracy . . . and unsafe for hypocrisy."

Resources

Barbeau, Arthur E. and Florette Henri. *The Unknown Soldiers: Black American Troops in World War I* . Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974.

Bennett, Lerone Jr. *Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America 1619-1964* . Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1970.

Consider the Source: Historical Records in the Classroom . Albany, NY: The University of the State of New York. The New York State Archives. (10A46 Cultural Education Center, Albany, NY 12230; www.sara.nysed.gov). This book includes a letter from one of the officers of the 369th Infantry.

Crew, Spencer R. *Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration 1915-1940* . Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1987.

Europe, James Reese. "Lieut. James R. Europe's 369th Hell Fighters' Band." Disc: IAJRC 1012 (available from Amazon.com).

Lawrence, Jacob. *The Migration Series* . Edited by Elizabeth Hutton Turner. Washington, DC: Rappahannock Press, 1993.

Nalty, Bernard C. *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* . New York: The Free Press,1986.

Teaching Activities

Document Analysis

1. Before looking at the documents featured in this lesson, brainstorm with students how we get the news today. What changes in news gathering and dissemination have occurred even in the last few years? What images of war do we see, how quickly do we see them, and how do they affect us? Now ask students to try to reconstruct how people living through World War I learned about events. What technologies existed at the time, and who controlled them? How important were photographs to the American public during World War I relative to today?

Copy and distribute the seven photographs that are featured documents. (For more photographs of the 369th Infantry, in NAIL http://www.nara.gov/nara/nail.html type "NWDNS-165-WW" in the first keyword space and "369th" in the second. For photographs that include these plus others about African Americans in World War I type in "NWDNS-165-WW" in the first keyword space and "World War I" in the second.)

Ask students the following questions: Why do you think the photographs of the 369th Infantry were taken? What strikes you as unusual or significant about them? Who took these photographs and for what purposes? The photographic record of World War I was compiled by three categories of photographers: official, press, and amateur. How would photographs taken in each of these categories have differed? Why? Do you have family photographs of war veterans? Would they be of historical significance? What would make them so?

Now divide the class into 7 groups and give each group one visual document to analyze using the Photograph Analysis Worksheet . In a class discussion, share and compare what students have learned.

Creative Writing

2. Ask students to imagine they are a person in one of the photos or someone at the scene depicted. Direct students to write a letter or a journal entry in which they describe why they are at this scene; what they hear, smell, and see; what emotions they are feeling and why; what events have led up to his or her being part of this scene. Ask student volunteers to read their letters to the class.

Listen to Music and Discuss

3. James Reese Europe, pictured in Photograph 4, and the regimental band of the 369th were famous, not only in America but throughout France where they introduced audiences to "le jazz." Play some examples of early jazz music for the class to hear. Now

play an example of popular music that predated jazz, such as a waltz or polka. Ask: What are the distinctive musical elements in jazz? What words would the Harlem Hellfighters have wanted to sing about their experiences? What are some current songs that express pride in bravery, or anger at racism?

Write News Articles

4. Ask students to write a news article answering the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? to accompany one of the photographs depicting African Americans in World War I. Direct students to use one of the photos featured in this lesson, or one of more than 60 additional photographs available in the NAIL Database <http://www.nara.gov/nara/nail.html> (conducting a search with "NWDNS-165-WW" as the keyword.) To extend this activity, place students in groups and publish their newspapers. Groups could be assigned according to similar themes (e.g., training camps in the United States, departure for Europe, roll call on the front, return home).

Research and Application

5. For an in-depth research project, ask students to search NAIL http://www.nara.gov/nara/nail.html using "NWDNS-165-WW (World War I)" as a key word to put together an oral report and slide show or PowerPoint presentation using as "slides" digital images on the computer screen. Students can take on a variety of roles in their presentations such as a) a veteran telling his story, b) a reporter exposing the segregationist policies of the Army, c) a civil rights activist presenting a speech to Congress or the Supreme Court arguing that the armed forces should be integrated, and d) a historian analyzing the African American contribution to World War I.

Research and Discuss

6. Lead a class discussion about other groups in U.S. history that have been excluded from or discriminated against in the armed services (Consider women, naturalized citizens from "enemy" countries, gays, the disabled). What do students believe should be the basis for inclusion and equal treatment in the armed services? Why?

Assign students to research how, when, and why the U.S. armed forces finally integrated. Ask: Who were the leaders and organizations growing out of the World War I-era who carried on the crusade for equal opportunity? What legislation, executive orders, constitutional amendments, and Supreme Court decisions played a role? What documents in NAIL http://www.nara.gov/nara/nail.html can students find to help answer this question? Direct students to the Truman Presidential Library's Project Whistlestop <http://www.whistlestop.org/>.

Research and Analyze

7. Ask students to hypothesize how life on the home front might have differed for African Americans before and after World War I. Areas for consideration include employment,

leadership, integration, and others. Direct students to library and Internet resources to research into this topic. Searching the NAIL database http://www.nara.gov/nara/nail.html will reveal paintings by Jacob Lawrence or photographs of the urban North, other sources will present poems and stories by writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Instruct students to write a paragraph explaining how their research supported or refuted their hypotheses.

The photographs included in this project are from Record Group 165, Records of the War Department. They are available online through the National Archives Information Locator (NAIL) http://www.nara.gov/nara/nail.html database, control numbers NWDNS-165-WW-127 (24), NWDNS-165-WW-127(42), NWDNS-165-WW-127(38), NWDNS-165-WW-127(41), NWDNS-165-WW-127 (62), NWDNS-165-WW-127(35), NWDNS-165-WW-127(63). NAIL is a searchable database that contains information about a wide variety of NARA holdings across the country. You can use NAIL to search record descriptions by keywords or topics and retrieve digital copies of selected textual documents, photographs, maps, and sound recordings related to thousands of topics.

This article was written by Joan Brodsky Schur, a teacher at Village Community School in New York, NY.

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Photograph Analysis Worksheet

Step 1. Observation

A. Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

PEOPLE	OBJECTS	ACTIVITIES

Step 2. Inference

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

_____

_____

_____

Step 3. Questions

A. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?

_____

_____

B. Where could you find answers to them?

_____

_____

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Photograph 1: Famous New York regiment parade as children gather along the line of march. (Photo by Underwood and Underwood)

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Photograph 2: New York's famous 369th regiment arrives home from France. (Photo by Western Newspaper Union)

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Photograph 3: Two American Negroes win Croix de Guerre. (Photo from International Film Service.)

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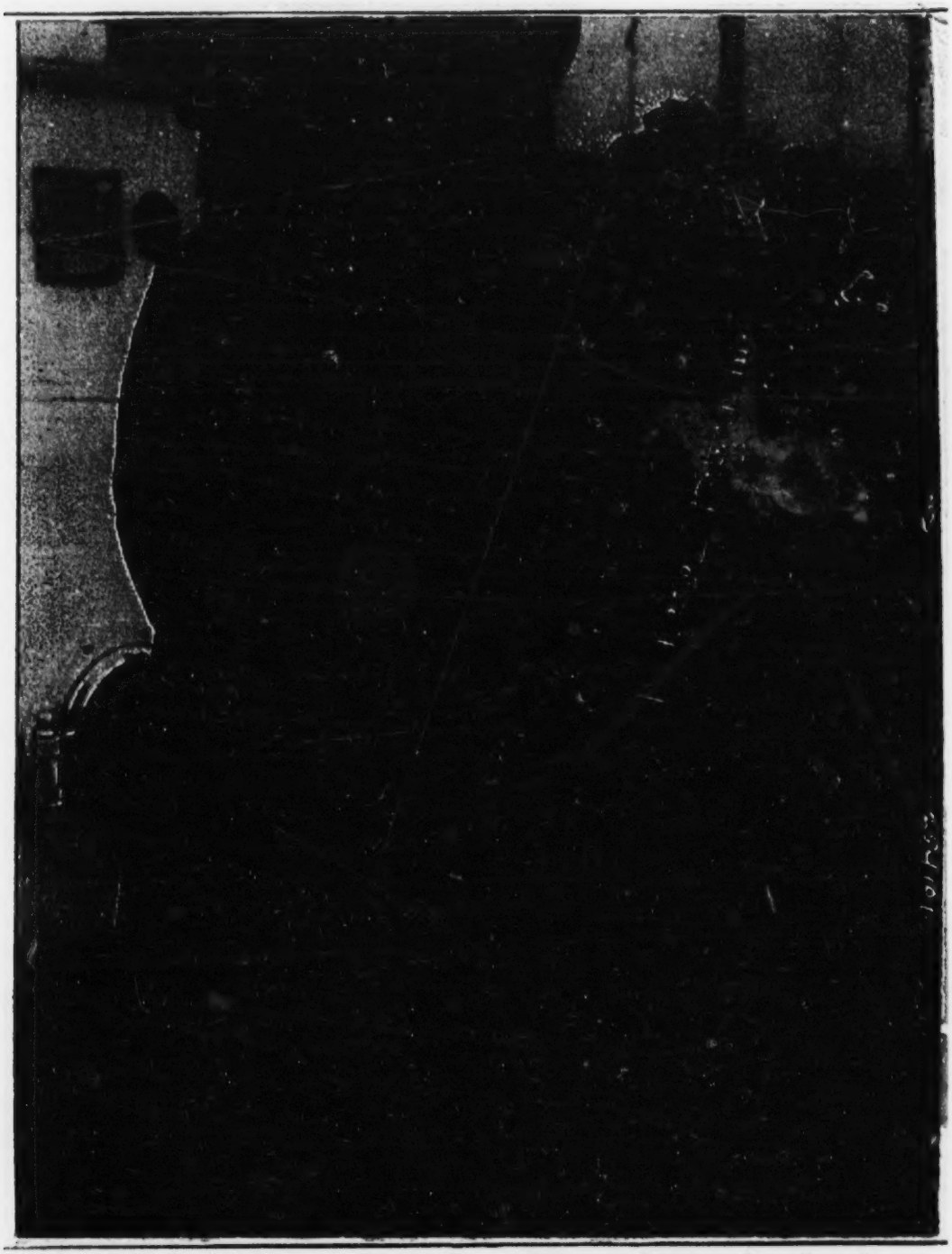

Photograph 4: Lieutenant James Reese Europe, famous jazz band leader, back with the 369th Regiment. (Photo by Underwood and Underwood.)

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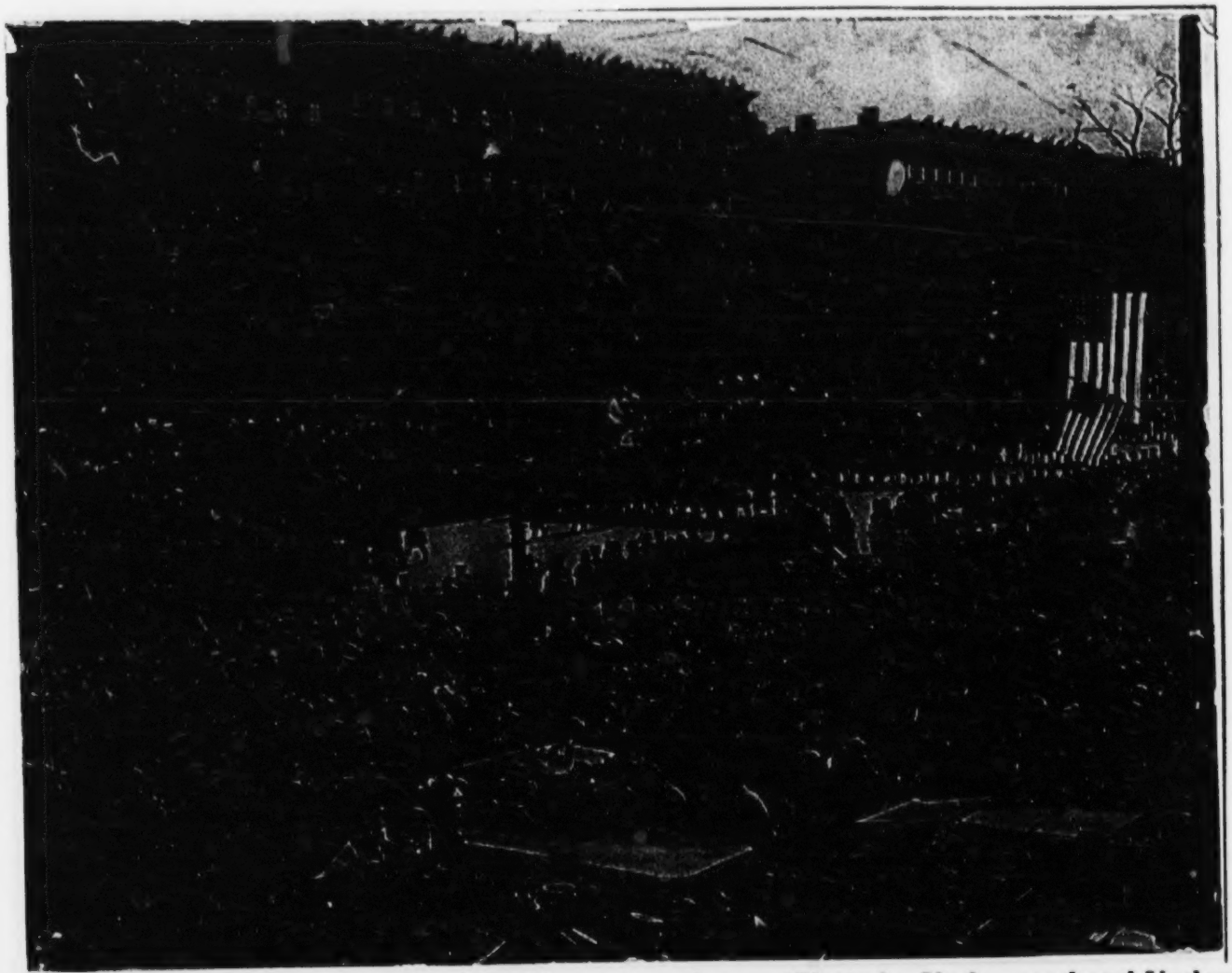

Photograph 5: Famous New York soldiers return home. (Photo by Underwood and Underwood.)

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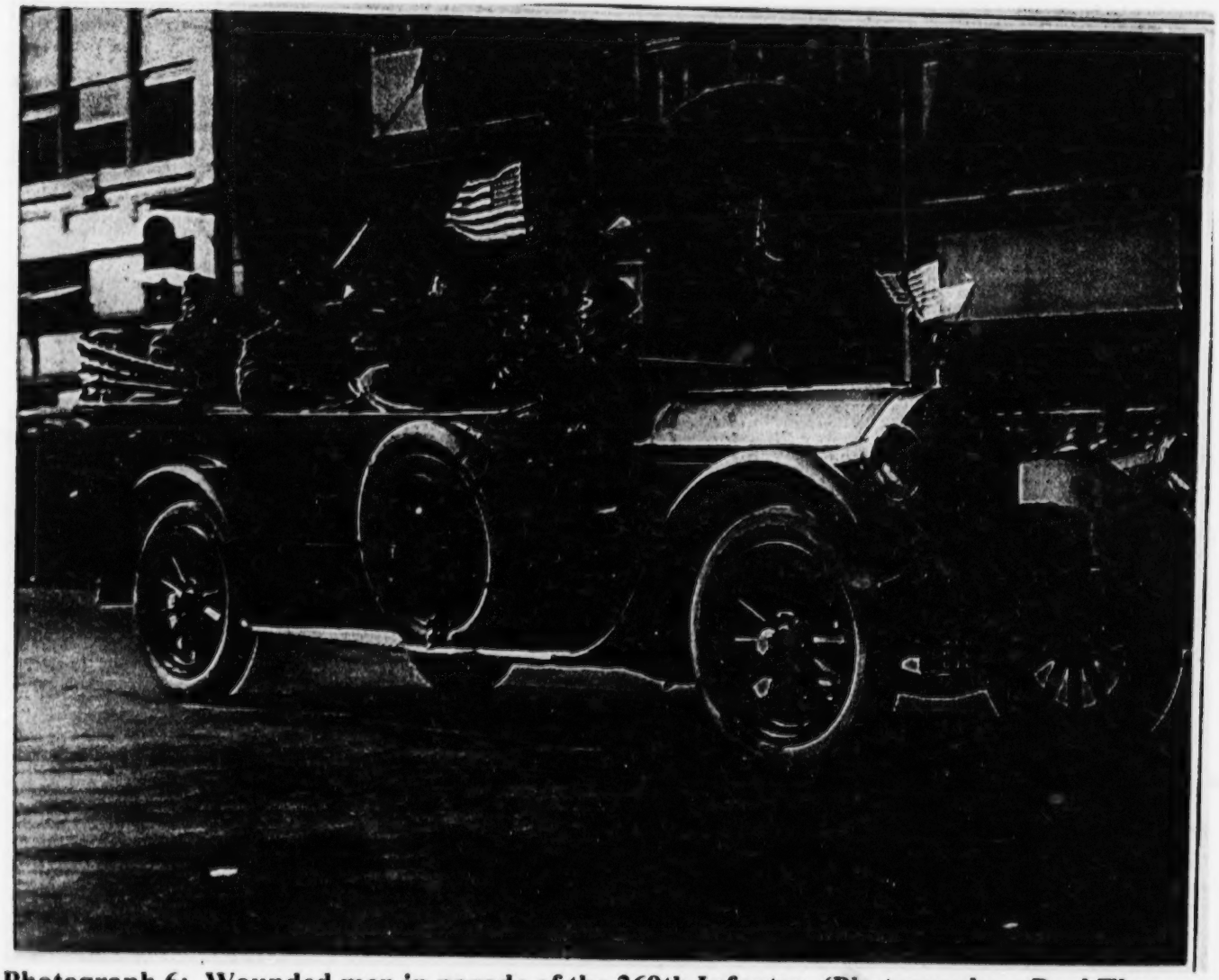
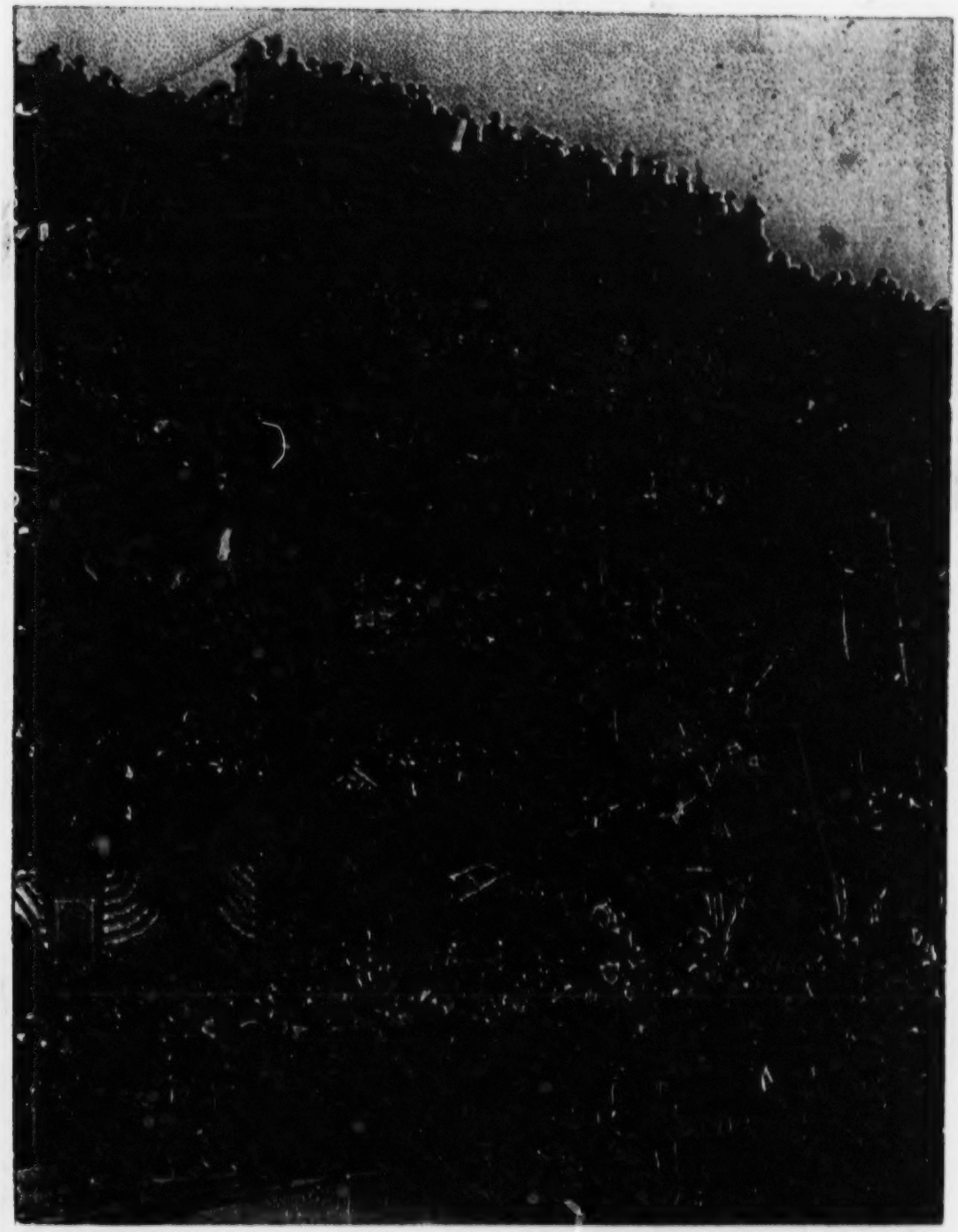


Photograph 6: Wounded men in parade of the 369th Infantry. (Photographer: Paul Thompson)



Photograph 7: Famous New York African American soldiers return home. Anxious crowds gathered in the streets. (Photo from Underwood and Underwood.)

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